



PUBLIC NOTICE

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

News Media Information 202 / 418-0500
Fax-On-Demand 202 / 418-2830
TTY 202 / 418-2555
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>
<ftp.fcc.gov>

DA 09-2137

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**COMMENTS SOUGHT ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISADVANTAGED BUSINESSES IN THE
AGE OF BROADBAND
NBP PUBLIC NOTICE # 9**

PLEADING CYCLE ESTABLISHED

GN DOCKET Nos. 09-47, 09-51, 09-137

Comment Date: November 2, 2009

Broadband technology is rapidly changing the way business is conducted in the United States and around the world. For example, using the Internet, small rural businesses can now compete in the global marketplace without the overhead cost of maintaining a satellite office or workforce. Many products that were once exclusively purchased in stores can now be obtained online. The Internet has become the great equalizer, placing small businesses on the same footing as large corporations when it comes to the digital marketplace. Broadband technology is already creating entrepreneurial opportunities for new entrants.

Currently, in the United States, small business accounts for well over 60% of all new jobs created. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, minority-owned firms are growing four times faster than all U.S. firms and account for over 50% of the 2 million businesses started in the United States in the past decade. There are now more than 4 million minority-owned companies in the United States. However, in order to survive and thrive in this new environment, small entities, women and minority-owned businesses (or Small and Disadvantaged Businesses (“SDBs”)) must learn to adapt to competition in a digital world. As we continue to work toward the development of a National Broadband Plan, we seek specific comment regarding the ability of SDBs to incorporate broadband technology into their business models.

Broadband and SDBs. We seek comment on the questions below, which are intended to elicit data on the current state of usage and penetration of broadband as it applies to SDBs and gather information about the use of broadband by SDBs.

a) What percentage of SDBs currently use broadband? What are the current speeds and prices of these services? What applications are being run over these connections?

b) What obstacles prevent SDBs from taking advantage of broadband technology: (i) lack of available broadband; (ii) lack of affordable broadband or budgetary constraints; (iii) digital literacy concerns; or (iv) social/cultural considerations? Please comment on these or any other obstacles.

c) For SDBs in traditional businesses that may not yet rely on broadband, such as car repair shops, dry-cleaners, bodega owners, and tool and die makers, how can broadband improve their

businesses? Please provide specific examples and data where available. What needs to be done to encourage such businesses to utilize broadband technology?

d) Are there data regarding how many new jobs have been created when SDBs take advantage of broadband? What is the impact of broadband adoption on SDB productivity and innovation? How do these data vary across sectors?

e) What role should institutions such as the Federal Communications Commission, the Small Business Administration, the Department of Labor, local Chambers of Commerce, community colleges and other community organizations play in ensuring that SDBs take better advantage of broadband technology?

f) What challenges do SDBs owned by limited-English speakers face in using broadband technology?

g) As government rolls out broadband stimulus funds to reach unserved and underserved communities and as broadband construction occurs generally, how do we ensure that SDBs are able to participate in the construction process and benefit from that construction?

h) How do we ensure that SDBs participate as information and content providers on the Internet?

i) How can public/private partnerships assist the growth of SDBs and their use of broadband technology? Please provide specific examples. Should the Commission facilitate creation of public-private partnerships for this purpose?

j) What else should the National Broadband Plan include specifically to assist SDBs?

This matter shall be treated as a “permit-but-disclose” proceeding in accordance with the Commission’s *ex parte* rules. See 47 C.F.R. §§ 1.1200, 1.1206. Persons making oral *ex parte* presentations are reminded that memoranda summarizing the presentations must contain summaries of the substance of the presentations and not merely a listing of the subjects discussed. More than a one- or two-sentence description of the views and arguments presented generally is required. See 47 C.F.R. § 1.1206(b). Other rules pertaining to oral and written *ex parte* presentations in permit-but-disclose proceedings are set forth in section 1.1206(b) of the Commission’s rules, 47 C.F.R. § 1.1206(b).

All comments should refer to GN Docket Nos. 09-47, 09-51, and 09-137. Please title comments and reply comments responsive to this Notice as “Comments – NBP Public Notice # 9.” Further, we strongly encourage parties to develop responses to this Notice that adhere to the organization and structure of the questions in this Notice.

Comments may be filed using (1) the Commission’s Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS), (2) the Federal Government’s eRulemaking Portal, or (3) by filing paper copies.¹ Comments filed through the ECFS can be sent as an electronic file via the Internet to <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/ecfs/> or the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>.² Generally, only one copy of an electronic

¹ See Electronic Filing of Documents in Rulemaking Proceedings, 63 Fed. Reg. 24121 (1998).

² Filers should follow the instructions provided on the Federal eRulemaking Portal website for submitting comments.

submission must be filed. In completing the transmittal screen, commenters should include their full name, U.S. Postal Service mailing address, and the applicable docket or rulemaking number. Parties may also submit an electronic comment by Internet e-mail. To get filing instructions for e-mail comments, commenters should send an e-mail to ecfs@fcc.gov, and should include the following words in the body of the message, "get form." A sample form and directions will be sent in reply. Parties who choose to file by paper must file an original and four copies of each filing.

Filings can be sent by hand or messenger delivery, by commercial overnight courier, or by first-class or overnight U.S. Postal Service mail (although we continue to experience delays in receiving U.S. Postal Service mail). All filings must be addressed to the Commission's Secretary, Office of the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission.

- The Commission's contractor will receive hand-delivered or messenger-delivered paper filings for the Commission's Secretary at 236 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E., Suite 110, Washington, D.C. 20002. The filing hours at this location are 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. All hand deliveries must be held together with rubber bands or fasteners. Any envelopes must be disposed of before entering the building.
- Commercial overnight mail (other than U.S. Postal Service Express Mail and Priority Mail) must be sent to 9300 East Hampton Drive, Capitol Heights, MD 20743.
- U.S. Postal Service first-class mail, Express Mail, and Priority Mail should be addressed to 445 12th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20554.

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For further information about this Public Notice, please contact Randy Clarke at (202) 418-1500.

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